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WHEN SOUND BECOMES FORM

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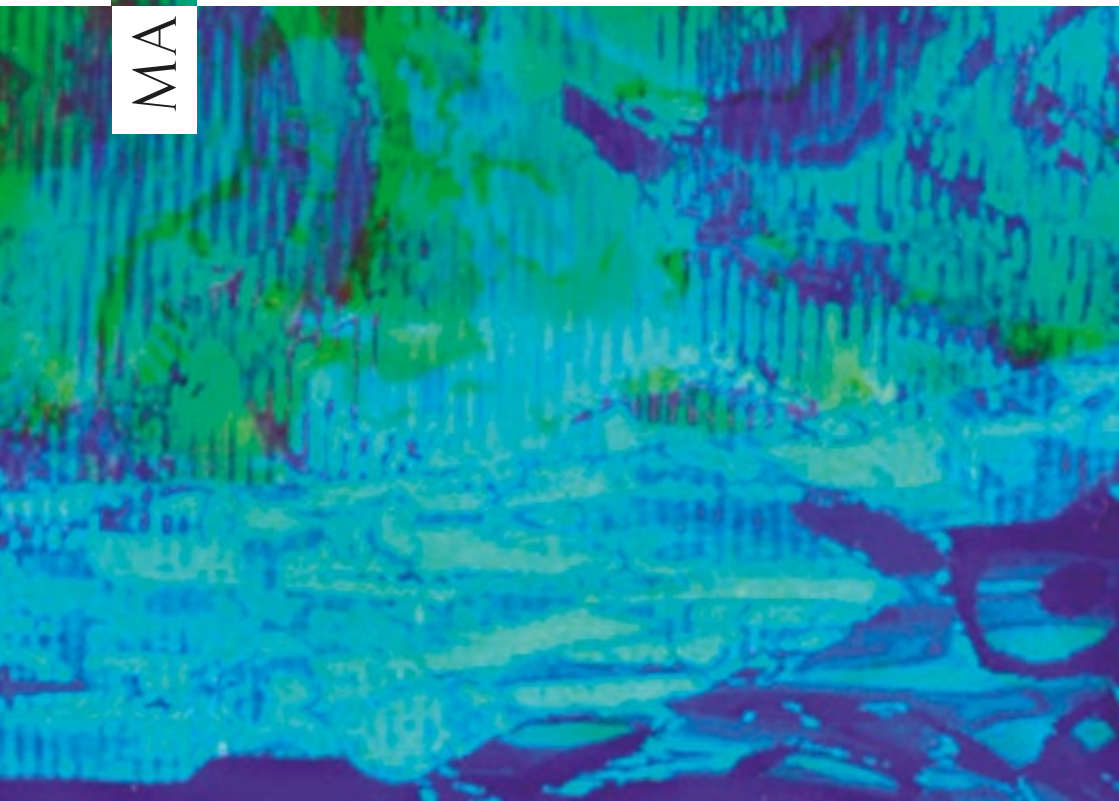
SOUND EXPERIMENTATIONS IN ITALY. 1950–2000

MAXXI



50 / 60

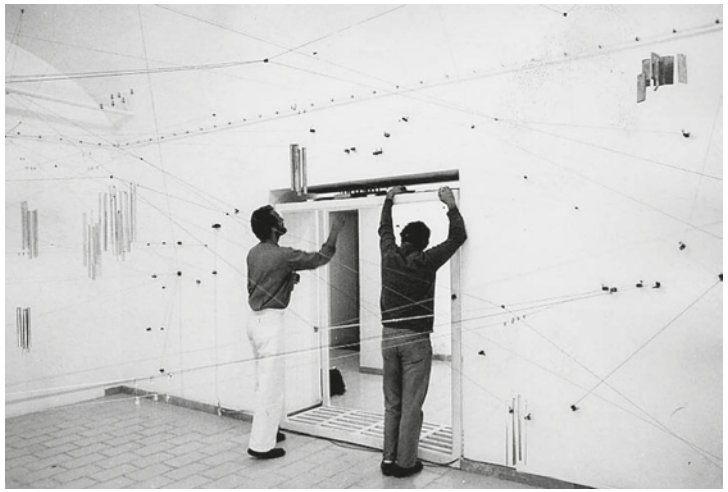
The exhibition curated by Carlo Fatigoni presents a selection of archive documents dedicated to the history of avant-garde sound art in Italy. The homage, which follows on from previous projects in the museum's new dedicated exhibition space for archives, uses different types of documents to present the development of sound experimentation in Italy, following a time frame that traces the landmark moments of the country's history. Sound leaves the staff, freed from rules and codes, and is no longer examined as a note or a harmonic sequence but instead as the pure perception of the vibration of an oscillating body. New electronic technologies drive the creation of innovative artistic styles, allowing for the manipulation of sound and the amplification of the space of creative invention. Sound becomes form and invades creative and physical space: developed to its full potential, from silence to noise, from phoneme to instruments, all the way to the infinite possibilities of reproduction, it permeates the fabric of art in a widespread manner, contaminating cinema, art, choreography, literature, publishing and mass media, even if the market doesn't immediately respond.
From the great fathers of compositional experimentation in the 60s, like Luciano Berio and Bruno Maderna, sound makes its entrance into the expressiveness of gesture with Giuseppe Chiari and Fluxus, each note becoming an autonomous and specific element. In contact with Fluxus, John Cage and the Gutai Group, the figures of Giuseppe Chiari, Sylvano Bussotti and Gianni Emilio Simonetti stand out. These new languages include the *happening and the graphic musical notation* or graphic score, for which Daniele Lombardi stands out. *Sound Poetry* is born with Arrigo Lora Totino's work *Fonemi (Phonemes)*. Adriano Spatola, Maurizio Nannucci and Patrizia Vicinelli are associated with vocal action. Also worth mentioning is Eugenio Carmi's *Stripsody*, with vocals by Cathy Berberian, which is anticipated by Mimmo Rotella's *Manifesto della Poesia Epitaltica (Manifesto of Epistaltic Poetry)*. Research into electronic sound is advanced by Phonology studies carried out with Enore Zaffiri, Teresa Ramazzi, Ennio Chiggio and Pietro Grossi in Milan, Turin, Padua and Florence. From the intermedial to the interactive, sound experimentation begins to turn towards the public. A forerunner is Giuseppe Pinot Gallizio's work, *La Caverna dell'Antimateria (The Cavern of Antimatter)*, in 1958. In Milan we find Gruppo T and Ugo La Pietra engaged in the same technological research with their *Ambienti audiovisivi immersivi (Immersive audio-visual environments)*. Science itself becomes an aleatorial dimension in *Sfera con Sirena (Sphere with Siren)* by Sergio Lombardo. The improvisation *ensemble* is born, where the craftmanship of sound meets sound technology. In Rome, the *Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza* and *Musica Elettronica Viva* are formed; in Milan, Walter Marchetti and Juan Hidalgo put together the group Zaj with the support of American composer John Cage.

70

In the 70s, sound experimentation begins to spread beyond the space of private investigation, starting to come face to face with the general public. The new forms of research into sound find their place in the cultural landscape with the creation of the first dedicated events, as summarised in the subtitle of the first *Dalle cantine all'asfalto* festival. Pietro Grossi creates one of the first networked musical connections, remotely playing songs and random sound structures. Vincenzo Agnetti creates *NEG*, a stereo turntable that isolates silence; in *Sezione ritmica – Sezione Aurea (Rhythm Section – Golden Section)*, Davide Mosconi uses metal spikes to engrave vinyl records; the Mara Coccia Gallery in Rome turns into a musical instrument in Alvin Curran's installation *Magic Carpet* and in Milan in 1978 *Vibractions* by Ferruccio Ascari becomes a unit of measurement through the use of sound. In *Boschetto di Alberi Parlanti e profumati (Forest of Talking and Perfumed Trees)* Luca Maria Patella creates an interactive soundscape from wind and birdsongs. In 1975 Albert Mayr produces *Performances from Time Aspects*, an aesthetic approach to the everyday management of time (*sound time*). The partnership between Christina Kubisch and Fabrizio Plessi is born. During exhibitions, unusual objects are used as amplified sources of sound and are spread throughout the space. At the Beat 72 festival, Rome is invaded by sounds and improvisations: a *Parade* roams the streets, Mario Schiano directing the spectators with their instruments. Demetrio Stratos releases *Metrodora*, the first completed experiment in which singing is the sound that destroys the traditional use of voice. In the field of Sound Poetry, Maurizio Nannucci and Lora Totino publish the Anthology *Poesia sonora (Sound poetry)* and Giovanni Fontana publishes R*adio/ dramma (Radio/drama)*, "an interior monologue intersected by external voice-noises excitedly in conversation". Lora Totino also releases *Futura Poesia Sonora (Future Sound Poetry)* and founds the group *Il Dolce Stil Suono* with Giovanni Fontana. Adriano Spatola founds "BAOBAB", a poetry magazine in the form of an audiotape: it is 1978. *Il Treno Di John Cage (John Cage's Train)* appears on the horizon: a happening that occurs inside stations and train carriages in Bologna, recording the interaction between the ambient sounds produced by trains and passengers. In 1979, the *Bologna Rock* festival, organised by the underground label *Harpo's Bazaar*, closes a tumultuous decade and marks the official birth of new wave in Bologna.

Gesto e segno, Poster of the exhibition on a project by Gianni Emilio Simonetti, Galleria Blu, Milan, 1964

The Great Complotto Pordenone, Italian Records, vinyl LP Album, cover, 1977–2005



Alvin Curren, Paul Klerr, Magic Carpet, sound installation, Galleria Mara Coccia / Arco D'Alibert, Roma, 1970

Pietro Grossi and Sergio Maltagliati, gallery Il Gabbiano, La Spezia, Photo by Paola Zucchella, 1997

80

The year 1980 opens with Italy's most serious terrorist attack since World War II: the massacre at Bologna train station. Carmelo Bene pays homage to the event with *Lectura Dantis*. These years see the emergence of the punk movement, which opens the doors to creativity: *Great Complotto*, a musical artistic movement, contaminates art and media from Bologna to Pordenone; in Milan, the Virus community centre is at the heart of Italy's first punk scene. In the same years, the computer becomes popular. Sound art evolves with *Sixto/notes* in Milan, which involves big names in the 1982 event *Sonorità Prospettiche (Perspective acoustics)*. *FORMAT– architetture sonore (FORMAT– architectures of sound)* is a group of musicians that experiment with everyday materials and with the acoustic environment; Luca Miti collaborates with them. The experimentation stimulated by technology puts in motion a new research that broadens consciousness and vision (cyber, hacktivism). GMM (Giovanotti Mondani Meccanici) use these technologies both for sound installations and for radio and television broadcasts. Giacomo Verde is among the first Italians to create interactive works of art and net-art, collaborating with Correnti Magnetiche, a collective conceived of by the musician Riccardo Sinigaglia and the painter Mario Canali. The first works are two- and three- dimensional audio-visual compositions connected through music and imagery. Tommaso Tozzi is the first Italian hacker artist. Called to participate in *MusicalMente-1 Festival di musica ambientale (MusicalMente-1 Festival of ambient music)*, he creates a subliminal installation. Ale Guzzetti, an artist involved in technological and interactive art, creates *Sculture sonore (Sound sculptures)*, an assemblage of everyday objects capable of emitting sounds, noises, voices and lights. In the field of sound poetry, in 1983 Giovanni Fontana releases *Poema Larsen*, built from the modulation of acoustic feedback. Nicola Frangione releases the first Mail Music compilation and a collection of Sound Poetry, *RADIO TAXI. Vibrazioni del Sonoro (RADIO TAXI. Vibrations of Sound)* is founded and directed by Sarenco. In the field of graphic notation, in 1981 taken place the key exhibition in Florence *Spartito Preso, la musica da vedere (Taken Score, the music to see)*, curated by Daniele Lombardi, is key.

90 / 2000

In 1990, Mario Sasso and Nicola Sani receive the Linz Prix Ars Electronica for the video composition *Footprint* and Marcello Aitiani exhibits his *Nave di Luce (Ship of Light)*, a pioneering work that anticipates new information communication technologies. In Rome, Ida Gerosa presents *Memorie d'acqua Fontana di Trevi* a multimedia performance with music and ambient sound by Luigi Ceccarelli. The catalogue *Nuova Officina Bolognese*, published by Bologna's Modern Art Gallery, comes with a CD of research musicians from the Bologna art scene. *Sound. Forme e colori del suono (Sound. Forms and colours of sound)*, a historical excursus of the main artists in the field of sound and audio-visual installations, is set up at the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Bolzano in 1993. In 1992 Mauro Sambo and Ignazio Lago present a live performance, *Ferita da Taglio (Cut Wound)*, in which musical improvisation enters into dialogue with a performer, who transforms materials such as grease, marble, industrial insulation, photographs and a lance into sound objects. In 1994, Roberto Paci Dalò gives life to a soundscape dedicated to the city of Naples and Michelangelo Lupone develops l'*Immaginario Radiofonico (the Radiophonic Imaginarium)*, a sound installation inspired by some of the typical aspects of radiophony. With 1995's interactive installation *Sky Waves*, Alessandro Fogar generates sounds from the meteorological data broadcast from radio stations. Sound experimentation advances further with *Sound & Fury*, the title of a series of compositions in which Agostino Di Scipio uses models derived from "chaos theory" to generate sound. In 1997, composer Sergio Maltagliati's *CIRCUS_8* develops new variations of sound by getting involved with the codes of Pietro Grossi's graphic programmes. Sound and art are intertwined once more in 1999 with *I Dormienti* by Brian Eno and Mimmo Paladino, an installation of music and imagery realised in London. The decade closes with sound again becoming material in *Pietra Sonora (Sounding Stone)*: Amalia del Ponte creates *Litofoni (Lithophones)*, thin stone slabs that are tuned and played as percussion instruments whilst Pinuccio Sciola plays the *Pietre sonore (Sounding stones)* like big menhirs that resonate with the movement of his hand. The work of Luca Vitone at the beginning of the millennium finally orients sound research towards geographical memory, to the origins of collective history in which physical places and sounds take on the meaning of a space understood as an anthropological experience.

IMAGES ON WALL

1 Gruppo T, *Strutturazione temporale di uno spazio urbano*, at occasion of the manifestation *Campo urbano* curated by Luciano Caramel, Como 1969. Photo Ugo Mulas

2 Mimmo Rotella, *La poesia epistaltica*, video still from *La settimana Incom*, 24/04/1954

3 *Parole sui muri*, poster of the exhibition International festival in Fiumalbo, fondazione Bonotto, Modena 8–18 August 1967

4 Carlo Alfano, *Stanza per voci*, Archivio delle nominazioni, 1968–1969, Courtesy collezione Alfano d'Amora, Napoli

5 Gruppo NPS, *re production of Ambiente Sonoro*, 32th International Art Exhibition, Venice Biennale, 1964, drawing by Ennio L. Chiggio, Courtesy Archivio Ennio L. Chiggio

6 Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza, *Aleatory Boys*, 60's, video still from the documentary by Theo Gallehr Nuova consonanza, 1967–1969

7 Arrigo Lora Totino and Pietro Fogliati with a Liquimofono, 1968

8 Walter Marchetti, *The Hunt. Quartet No. 2*, 1965, score, page 1, 1968. Graphic notation from "Arpocrate Seduto sul Loto" (detail)

9 Michiko Hirayama, Vittorio Gelmetti e Sylvano Bussotti at Gallery Obelisco, Rome 1966

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11 Gregory J. Markopoulos, *Die Schachtel*, 1968, TV Film, Bayerische Rundfunk Deutschland, video still, 1968

12 Giuseppe Chiari plays piano at Royal College of Art, London, April 1974

13 Enore Zaffiri, *Data for the realization of the project Musica per un anno*, 1968

14 Gruppo 70. Lamberto Pignotti, Emilio Isgrò, Lucia Marcucci, Eugenio Miccini, Feltrinelli, Milan 1966

15 Sergio Lombardo, *Esecuzioni di A. Homberg*, Gallery Jartrakor Roma, 1973

16 Sergio Lombardo, *Sfera con Sirena*, Roma, La Salita Gallery, Roma 1969

17 Daniele Lombardi, *Notazione 44 di un fatto sonoro che l'esecutore ricrea nella propria immaginazione*, 1969 Collezione Carlo Palli, Prato

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24 Patrizia Vicinelli, *a. à. A*, Edizione Lerici, Marcatrè magazine, vinyl, LP, Italy, december 1966

25 Pietro Grossi at CNUCE, Pisa, 1965

26 Ugo La Pietra, *Ambienti audiovisivi*, from the series *Le Immersioni*, Courtesy Galleria Toselli, Milan 1968

27 Sylvano Bussotti, *piano piece for david tudor 4*, graphic notation, 1959

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30 *Bologna Rock. Dalle cantine all'asfalto*, poster with photos of the groups participating at the festival, April 2th 1979

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32 *Bologna Rock. Dalle cantine all'asfalto*, poster of the festival, April 2th 1979

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37 Giovanni Fontana, *Oggi, poesia domani*, international review of phonetic and visual poetry by Giovanni Fontana and Adriano Spatola, poster 1979

38 Giovanni Fontana and Lamberto Pignotti, *Oggi poesia domani*, 1979 from DOC(K S), n. 23 Summer 1980

39 AA. VV. *Revolutions Per Minute (The Art Record)*, Song Cyrcle Recors, Double vinyl album, LP, cover and inside, New York 1982

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45, 46 Giancarlo Cardini, Sylvano Bussotti, *Novelletta per Pianoforte*, 1973, graphic notation, 1973

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71 *Pinuccio Sciola plays stone*, Photo Pier Paolo Perla, 1998

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85 Amalia del Ponte, *Musica in Gocce, marmo verde della Turchia*, drawing, 1995

86 Amalia Del Ponte, *litovocis*, 1996, cover and booklet from the vinyl LP, 1996

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